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SUBJECT: TAWAFOQ NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATES HOPE TO "REFORM" THE NINEWA PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

REF: MOSUL 207

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) REO Poloff met with Tawafog Iraqi Front (#618) national assembly delegates at the Provincial Joint Command Center (PJCC) on February 2. Tawafog members said they have many plans to help Ninewa from their positions in the federal government. Izzi Adola said Tawafog would like to push for all Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) serving in the province to be "from Ninewa." He said they would like to help the local economy by constructing Mosul International Airport, which they believe would create jobs and make travel to Baghdad easier. Adola said Tawafog delegates would like to change security procedures in Ninewa, especially with regards to arrests and detainments by ISF and Coalition Forces (CF). Tawafog members said CF cross lines of cultural sensitivities during raids, which causes problems in relations with the public. Adola said the provincial government has "too much control" over policy and political issues in Ninewa, and that Tawafog members propose stripping away some of the provincial government's authority over areas such as security and justice. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

2. (SBU) REO Poloff met with Tawafog Iraqi Front (#618) national assembly delegates at the Provincial Joint Communication Center (PJCC) in Mosul on February 2. In attendance were: Izzi Lden Adola, Turkmen Front member from Tal Afar who worked on the transitional government's constitutional drafting committee and president of the Ninewa Lawyer's Union; Nawal Majeed Hameed M.D., of the Al Salaam Hospital in Mosul and Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) member; and, Noredin Hamdoon Abdulla, IIP member and lawyer (reftel).

PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW GOVERNMENT

3. (C) Poloff welcomed the Tawafog delegates and asked them what their priorities are for the new government, specifically for Ninewa. The first area of concern, according to Adola, is that Iraqi Army (IA) and Iraqi Police (IP) forces operating in the province should be "from Ninewa," since he believes "too many are from southern Iraq." Second, Adola said Tawafog wants to end "random arrests and detainments" by Coalition (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), and create a "real procedure" for dealing with terrorists. Last, Adola said the economy should be a top concern, especially rebuilding Mosul International Airport. Adola believes Mosul is "too large" to be without an airport, which could also help speed travel to and from Baghdad.

ETHNIC TENSIONS

4. (C) Abdulla claims the federal government is made up of "Shiite sectarians," which "fuels conflict" between Sunni and Shiite, Kurds and Arabs. He believes these "tensions" have also spilled over into Ninewa politics as well. Abdulla said recent events in Tal Afar, where the chief of police, who is Shia, removed Sunni officers and replaced them with Shia, causes unnecessary problems. Abdulla believes events like these "did not exist before" the fall of Saddam Hussein. He also desires a new provincial government with more Sunni Arab representation, since the current provincial council is "dominated by Kurds." Adola believes political disagreement in Iraqi today has digressed into name-calling where the word "terrorist" is thrown around far too loosely. Abdulla remains confident, however, that these problems could all be solved by political means and not violence. He claims Tawafog has already engaged in dialogue to build relations with secular coalitions, such as Iyad Allawi's National Iraqi List and the Kurdish Coalition.

SECURITY CONCERNS AND CULTURAL SENSITIVITIES

15. (C) Tawafog members are upset over what they see as a provincial government that allows too much free reign to security forces when it comes to issues of terrorism. Abdulla said it is "too easy" to label someone a terrorist these days. And as a result, he believes Coalition (CF) and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) all too often conduct "unnecessary raids" on "innocent persons." He and Hameed gave several examples of "whole neighborhoods" being blocked off after a bomb explodes or a terrorist attacks happens. Hameed claims CF and ISF then "barge into homes," "harassing the men," and "creating chaos." She believes CF "do not adhere to Islamic cultural and religious sensitivities," and as a result women in many Sunni Arab neighborhoods are "forced to sleep wearing their headscarves," lest they be seen by CF without one. Hameed believes arresting women "goes too far" since women should not be punished for acts committed by their brothers or spouses. Abdulla and Hameed said that CF have "desecrated mosques" in Mosul and Tal Afar, for example, by not removing their boots before entering. Hameed and Abdulla said these cultural infractions constitute a "red light" that should "never be crossed." And to do so only incites the public to "react against" CF, ISF, and the provincial government.

16. (C) Poloff said CF and ISF have said they do not conduct random raids and arrests, and that the searches are based on information they have received on specific persons. Poloff asked the delegates, however, for their suggestions on how CF, ISF, and the USG could help build trust with the Sunni Arab community. Abdulla suggests CF and ISF "target individuals" rather than "whole neighborhoods." Adola and Abdulla claim they have spoken to CF commanders over the past few years about these problems but that "nothing was done." He said, however, that Tawafog would continue to have a relationship with CF and engage them regularly about these and other issues. Poloff asked the delegates what suggestions they might have for handling cases where women may have been found to have direct links to terrorist activities. Abdulla said in such cases "only [ISF] should arrest women, not [CF]."

DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

17. (C) Adola accused the provincial government of being "disconnected" from the public. He believes they should be more willing to listen to community leaders about how to solve issues in Mosul, especially with regards to terrorism. Adola claims he has sought a voice with the governor, but that the governor either cancels the meetings or schedules them "months away." Adola believes that if the provincial government handles prominent citizens in Mosul in this manner, then the "common man" must feel very neglected. Tawafog members believe the provincial government has "too much control" over policy and political issues in Ninewa. They propose stripping away some of the authority the provincial government has over areas of security and justice. Abdulla claims this change would be "natural" since the provincial government authority was modeled after Basra. He believes a new system should be based on, "Realities on the ground."
GETTINGER